

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05144 191335Z
ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 05144

E.O. 11652: GDS-84
TAGS: MORG, XM
SUBJECT: HOST COUNTRY MILITARY TRAINING

REF: STATE 166382, DTD 301421Z JUN 78.

1. PANAMA HAS NO KNOWN INTENTION OR REAL CAPABILITY OF SETTING UP A REPLACEMENT FOR THE US ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS (USARSA). IT IS TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THEIR LIKELY REACTION TO ANY EVENTUAL U.S. PROPOSALS FOR SOME SORT OF UNDEFINED U.S.-PANAMANIAN COOPERATIVE OPERATION WHICH MIGHT EXTEND THE LIFE OF USARSA ITSELF, BEYOND THE FIVE YEARS PROVIDED IN THE 1977 TREATY-RELATED DOCUMENTS.

2. PANAMA HAS IN THE PAST YEAR ESTABLISHED JUNGLE SURVIVAL, BASIC NCO, AND BASIC STAFF OFFICER COURSES WHICH IT CONSIDERS AS SUBSTITUTES OR AT LEAST SUPPLEMENTS FOR USARSA COURSES. HOWEVER, PANAMA USES AND IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE USING USARSA AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

3. PANAMA'S PARTICIPATION IN EXCHANGE PROGRAMS PER SE IS SHARPLY LIMITED BY THEIR HAVING LITTLE TO OFFER--A FEW STUDENTS FROM THE U.S., HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR WERE INVITED TO AND DID PARTICIPATE IN THEIR NEW JUNGLE SURVIVAL COURSE; OTHER LATAM NATIONS MAY BE INVITED TO SEND STUDENTS TO THIS COURSE IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, PANAMA SENDS CADETS TO A
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VARIETY OF LATAM MILITARY ACADEMIES AND WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO DO SO. REPUTED PLANS TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN MILITARY ACADEMY HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN SUSPENDED FOR 2-5 YEARS BECAUSE OF THE COSTS INVOLVED AND THE LIMITED ANNUAL OFFICER INPUT REQUIREMENTS OF THE GUARDIA NACIONAL.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE COOPERATIVE MILITARY RELATION-

SHIP CONTEMPLATED BY THE NEW TREATY FOR COMBINED DEFENSE OF
THE CANAL MAY LEAD TO SOME SORT OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS BETWEEN
THE GUARDIA NACIONAL AND U.S. FORCES IN PANAMA, FOR TRAINING
OR FOR FULLFLEDGED ACTIVE DUTY, OR BOTH. SUCH ARRANGEMENTS,
HOWEVER, ARE STILL PROBABLY A YEAR OR TWO DOWN THE ROAD.
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